

**LEGISLATIVE HEARING BILL**  
**H.B. 6011- John Alexander**

Good afternoon Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan and members of the Public Safety and Security Committee. My name is John Alexander and I am the Administrator for the Enfield Youth Firesetter Prevention and Intervention Program and a member of the statewide Youth Set Fire Steering Committee. I'm here to testify in **support** of Proposed H.B. No. 6011, An Act Creating a Juvenile Fire Safety Collaborative.

In 2009, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) statistics on fire related damage/injuries note there were 1,348,550 fires at a cost of \$40.3 billion dollars; In 2010, fires that resulted from children playing with fire costs an estimated \$210 million in property damages and 90 children died as a result. In 2011, there were 61 deaths and 70,900 injuries to firefighters during fireground operations. Although not all of the fires deaths and injuries are directly related to juvenile firesetting, fire prevention programs do save lives and preventing injuries to firefighters, children and families. By establishing a coordinated statewide juvenile firesetting program that draws upon our existing network of programs across Connecticut, we increase our ability to deliver integrated and appropriate services to rehabilitate these children/youth and promote improved public safety, but also provide a significant cost benefit to Connecticut agencies, fire service, insurance companies and municipalities.

As the Program Administrator for the program in since 2002 and a member of the Statewide Youth Set Fire Program we have seen an increase of families and

children with complex issues and multiple needs. These families and children have presented to the program as a result of children involved with firesetting. These families have required a response from multiple agencies, varied approaches and innovative solutions. Often the biggest challenge is getting these families to engage in the program and assure that children participate in the program we offer.

Across the nation, children and families participating in a program that is supported by fire service, clinicians, juvenile justice and school personnel have resulted in less than a 2% recidivism rate. Fire Service personnel are specifically trained in the National Fire Academy program to work with youth and collaborate with other agencies to increase the success of the intervention.

As a trainer for the CT. State Fire Academy in the Youth Set Fire Interventionist I and II training, we assist fire service students in identifying key stakeholders to increase the likelihood of a child and family to participate in the program.

Historically, children that are involved in setting fires have either been arrested for arson related charges resulting in a felony charge or the child is released due to lack of knowledge around the behavior. The communities where there are Juvenile Review Boards, collaborative meetings regarding children's mental health and involvement in the juvenile justice system the fire service will be able to have support, resources and a systematic way to address this issue.

The bill before you will increase the likelihood that the Fire Service will not have to address this issue alone and children will get the proper interventions at no additional cost to the state. If approved, the state Youth Set Fire Steering Committee will reach out to its constituents to educate them on this issue and implement the project.

I appreciate your time and consideration and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.